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heroic times. Above all, don't use Homer to help you belittle Vergil. Both are supremely great in their respective ways.

VICTORIA COLLEGE, Toronto.

NORMAN C. DEWITT.

CORRESPONDENCE

Will you spare me space in THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY for a few words of appreciation of Mr. Stephen A. Hurlbut's admirable exhortation in the issue of April 1 to teachers of Latin to busy themselves with the Italian tongue? I heartily approve of Mr. Hurlbut's article, and am sure that it will be of the greatest value to those Latin teachers, if any there be now, who share the prejudice which, under the idea that it was a vulgar and degenerate derivative of Latin, I had against Italian before I knew the language.

I may say in passing that Mr. Hurlbut's remarks about the feminine plural *uova*, eggs, with the masculine singular *uovo*, from the Latin neuter *ovum*, recall to my mind another instance of feminine tenacity in Italian. Almost, if not quite, the only ordinary Italian noun ending in -o which is not of the masculine gender is *mano*, hand, which has steadfastly maintained the feminine gender of its Latin prototype, itself a marked exception to the rules for grammatical gender in the parent language.

There is only one point in regard to which I should be sorry to see Mr. Hurlbut's suggestions prevail, and that is the matter of pronunciation. Like himself, I never heard Latin so beautifully pronounced as by an Italian gentleman who happened to be my fellow-passenger in a railway carriage in Italy, and I recognize fully the beneficent influence of practising the pronunciation of Italian upon our pronunciation of Latin, but I should regard it as a misfortune to adopt the changes in the pronunciation of certain letters in Italian that have developed from the sounds which we know were given them by the Romans of classical times. Apart from the feeling of what the Germans call *Pietät* towards the ancient Romans themselves, the greater simplicity of having a single sound each for *c* and *g* in all cases is worth something, and it would be a pity to reintroduce, on the other hand, the unique case of one vowel sound represented by different characters that would be involved in giving up the Republican pronunciation of *ae*. While, too, we may properly despair, with Professor Bennett, of attaining the exact pronunciation of the ancients, we can approach it nearly enough for practical purposes, and surely very few scholars would seriously consider a return to "the abominations of the English method".

ST. GEORGE, Staten Island, New York.

HENRY PREBLE.

NOTE ON OBAERATUS

So far as I can follow up the notes in our school editions, it appears that they all correctly explain *obaeratus* as meaning 'one who in payment of his

debts has given himself into servitude'. One edition even refers the student to B.G.6.13, where Caesar mentions this as Gallic custom. In spite of this, the vocabularies all translate the word by 'debtor'. In view of the facts (for which compare Varro De Lingua Latina 7.105, quoted by W. W. Fowler, Social Life at Rome in the Age of Cicero, 219, note 2, where *obaerati* are described as those qui suas operas in operam dant pro pecunia quam debebant), should we not rather define the word by 'serf'?

ERNST RIESS.

From the February number of The Periodical, a magazine published by the Oxford University Press, to give notice of new and forthcoming books, we quote a paragraph which occurs under the caption *Obiter Scripta*, because it chimes in with an utterance to be found in THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 4.185:

"Annotated School-books are the very devil", says a writer in the July Cornhill, "but the remedy is easy—use plain texts". "Whether others have found this saying borne out by their experience", Professor D. A. Slater says in his *Stories from Ovid's Metamorphoses*, "I do not know. But a good many teachers will probably hesitate before expecting beginners to read with profit any work in a foreign language in the way in which Macaulay read the classics in India. He used plain texts, and the method which he describes is no doubt the ideal method—at a later stage. But it has its perils, and there is food for reflection in 'A.G.'s ironical advice:—

If you should consult the classics (and at times I think you must,

Just to show they're persons whom it's quite impossible to trust),

Do not seek the verbal meaning and the literal sense to render.

Read them (like the late Macaulay) with your feet upon the fender".

In a small book of only 48 pages (if the number of The Periodical quoted above is to be trusted), published at the high price of \$2.50 net, entitled *Hannibal's March through the Alps*, Professor Spenser Wilkinson argues that the pass followed by Hannibal was the Col du Clapier, and that the "acceptance of this route leads to a simple and possible explanation of the apparent discrepancies between the text of Polybius and that of Livy". The study is illustrated by two figures and four maps.

In the preface to his translation of Aristotle's *De Generatione Animalium*, Professor Arthur Platt writes:

"Should any man of science come fresh to the reading of his treatise, he will, I think, be amazed and delighted to see what grasp and insight Aristotle displays in handling questions which still absorb us after all that time. If we smile at some parts, and those very considerable parts, . . . let us remember that most of these oddities were accepted by no less a man than William Harvey, and that Darwin wrote with generous enthusiasm concerning another of the zoological works: 'Linnaeus and Cuvier have been my two gods, though in very different ways, but they were mere schoolboys to old Aristotle'".